

PAPERS OF JOHN F. KENNEDY
PRESIDENTIAL PAPERS
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Presidential Recordings

Transcript

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Transcripts

Cuban Missile Crisis Meetings
October 16, 1962



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FOREWORD

TRANSCRIPT WARNING. All written transcripts are imperfect abstracts of spoken conversation. Variations in sound quality and in the aural acuity of listeners can and do produce wide variations in what is heard. Even though transcripts may be prepared at great effort and with great care, many points of ambiguity are inevitable, and erroneous interpretations from transcripts are always possible. Therefore, to ensure full confidence in any and all quotations from the presidential recordings, users are strongly urged to check all transcript renditions against the actual tape recordings before publication.

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PUNCTUATION. The following conventions are used throughout the transcripts:

* * * To indicate a pause in the recording while the speaker listens to the person speaking at the other end of the telephone. Used when only one side of a telephone conversation is recorded.

[?] When the transcriber is not certain of what is said on the recording.

. . . . To indicate a sentence which the speaker trails off without completing it.

. . . When a speaker is interrupted before a sentence is completed.

_____ To indicate the speaker's emphasis.

[] Used to enclose editorial comments of the transcriber such as /Meeting appears to be breaking up./ or /Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible./.

NAMES. The first time a name is mentioned, the full name is provided whenever it is known. "JFK" and "RFK" are used for President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, respectively. When the identity of a speaker is unknown, "Speaker?" is used; when the identification of a speaker is uncertain, a question mark follows the name. The Tables of Contents list only the participants who have been at least tentatively identified as speakers. The heading of each transcript gives the names of all participants listed in the President's Appointment Books as scheduled to attend the meeting.

OFF-THE-RECORD MEETING ON CUBA
October 16, 1962
11:50 A.M. - 12:57 P.M.

File Cuban Missile Crisis Book by Bob

Caroline:

JFK:

Caroline:

JFK:

Caroline:

JFK:

[laughter]

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK?: Okay.

Lundahl: This is a result of the photography taken Sunday, sir.

JFK: Yeah.

Lundahl: There's a medium-range ballistic missile launch site and two new military encampments on the southern edge of Sierra del Rosario in west central Cuba.

JFK: Where would that be?

Lundahl: Uh, west central, sir. That. . . .

Speaker ?: South of [word unintelligible], south. . . .

Speaker ?: I think this [other?]/[gray or grade?] represents your three dots, we're talking about. Industrial.

JFK: Yeah.

Lundahl?: Have you got the [word unintelligible]?

Speaker ?: Yes, sir.

Lundahl?: The president would like to see those.

Lundahl: Well, on site on one of the encampments contains a total of at least fourteen canvas-covered missile trailers measuring 67 feet in length, 9 feet in width. The overall length of the trailers plus the tow-bars is approximately 80 feet. The other encampment contains vehicles and tents but with no missile trailers.

Speaker ?: These are the launchers here. These are missile bases up the

CLOSED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE
DONOR'S DEED OF GIFT.

[words unintelligible].

Lundahl?:

In this instance, the missile trailer is backing up to the launch point. The launching of this particular [word unintelligible] is here. The missile [can?]/[words unintelligible] hasn't been done.

Speaker ?:

Okay.

Lundahl:

The site that you have there contains at least 8 canvas-covered missile trailers. Four deployed probable missile erector launches. They are unrevetted. The probable launch positions as indicated are approximately 850 feet, 700 feet, 450 feet, for a total distance of about 2,000 feet. In Area II, there are at least 6 missile covered, missile, uh, canvas-covered missile trailers, about 75 vehicles, about 18 tents. And in Area number III, we have 35 vehicles, 15 large tents, 8 small tents, 7 buildings, and one building under construction. The critical one--Do you see what I mean?--is this one. There's [moonshine?] right there, see?

Speaker ?:

[Uh-huh.]

Lundahl?:

The missile trailer's backing up to it at the moment. It's got to be. And, uh, the missile trailer's here. [Seven?]/[words unintelligible] have been enlarged here. Those canvas-covered objects on the trailers were 67 feet long, and, uh, there's a small [hillock?] between the two of them. The gate on the, on that side protects the trailer ramps so that [words unintelligible]. That looks like the most advanced one. Then the other area's about 5 miles away. There are no launcher erectors over there, just missiles, uh . . .

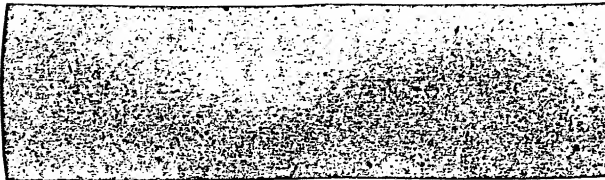
JFK:

How far advanced is this?

Lundahl:

JFK or RFK?:

Lundahl:



JFK:

How do you know this is a medium-range ballistic missile? . . .

Lundahl:

The length, sir.

JFK:

The what? The length?

Lundahl:

The length of it. Yes.

JFK:

The length of the missile? Which part? I mean which . . .

Lundahl:

. . . the missile [word unintelligible] indicates which one is

[words unintelligible]. This is still . . .

Speaker ?:

[Words unintelligible]

Lundahl:

Yes. Uh, Mr. Graybeal, our missile, uh, man, has some pictures of the equivalent Soviet equipment that has been dragged through the streets of Moscow, that can give you some . . .

Graybeal:

There are two missiles involved. One of them is our SS-3, which is 630 mile and on up to 700. It's about 68 feet long. These missiles measure out to be, uh, 68 foot long. The other missile, the 1,100 one, uh, is 73 foot long. The question we have in the photography is the nose itself. If the nose cone is not on that missile and it measures 67 feet--the nose cone would be 4 to 5 feet longer, sir; and with this extra length we could have a missile that'd have a range of 1,100 miles, sir. The missile that was drawn through the Moscow parade was [words unintelligible] but . . .

JFK:

Is this ready to be fired?

Graybeal:

No, sir.

JFK:

How long have we got. . . . We can't tell, I take it . . .

Graybeal:

No, sir.

JFK:

. . . how long before it can be fired?

Graybeal:

That depends on how ready the [GSC?]/[how or hous-?] . . .

JFK:

But, what does it have to be fired from?

Graybeal:

It would have to be fired from a stable hard surface. This could be packed dirt; it could be concrete or, or asphalt. The surface has to be hard, then you put a flame deflect-, a deflector plate on there to direct the missile.

McNamara:

Would you care to comment on the position of nuclear warheads--this is in relation to the question from the president--explain when these can be fired?

Graybeal?:

Sir, we've looked very hard. We can find nothing that would spell nuclear warhead in term of any isolated area or unique security in this particular area. The mating of the nuclear warhead to the missile from some of the other short range missiles there would take about, uh, a couple of hours to do this.

McNamara:

This is not defended, I believe, at the moment?

Lundahl:

Not yet, sir.

McNamara:

This is important as it relates to whether these, today, are ready to fire, Mr. President. It seems almost impossible to me that they

would be ready to fire with nuclear warheads on the site without even a fence around it. It may not take long to k-, to place them there, to erect a fence, but at least at the moment there is some reason to believe the warheads aren't present and hence they are not ready to fire.

Graybeal: Yes, sir, we do not believe they are ready to fire . . .

Taylor?: However, there is no feeling that they can't fire from this kind of field position very quickly, isn't that true? It's not a question of waiting for extensive concrete, uh, pads and that sort of thing?

Graybeal?: The unknown factor here, sir, is the degree to which the equipment has been checked out after it's been shipped from the Soviet Union here. It's the readiness of the equipment. If the equipment is checked out, the site has to be accurately surveyed, the position as is known. Once this is known, then you're talking a matter of hours.

Taylor?: Well, could this be an operational site except perhaps for the fact that at this point there are no fence? Could this be operational now?

Graybeal?: There is only one missile there, sir, and it's, uh, at the actual, apparently, launching area. It would take them. . . . If everything were checked out, it would still take them in the order of two to three hours before they could get that one missile up and ready to go, sir.

Lundahl or
Carter?:



Taylor?: You say there's only one missile there?

Graybeal?: There, uhm, are 8 missiles there. One of them is in what appears to be the position from which they're launched--in the horizontal. Apparently near an erector to be erected in vertical position.

Rusk: You have [erected one?] You mean something has to be built, or is that something that can be done in a couple of hours?

Speaker?: [Word unintelligible] . . .

Lundahl: Mobile piece of equipment, sir. We haven't any specifics yet on this but here is the way we believe that it could actually be lifted. Something of this nature. Now that, this would be the erectors, helping to raise the missile from this transporter up into a vertical position [words unintelligible] on the ground.

McNamara:

Am I correct in saying that we have not located any nuclear storage sites with certainty as yet? This is one of the most important thoughts we face in properly interpreting the readiness of, of these missiles. It's inconceivable to me that the Soviets would deploy nuclear warheads on an unfenced piece of ground. There's, there must be some storage site there. It should be one of our important objectives to find that storage site.

Lundahl or
Carter?:

May I report, sir, that two additional SAC*missions were executed yesterday? They were taken to Washington area last night. They're currently being chemically processed at the Naval Center at Suitland, and they're due to reach us at the National PI** Center around 8 o'clock tonight. Both of these missions go from one end of Cuba to the other--one along the north coast and one along the south--so additional data on activities or these storage sites which we consider critical may be in our grasp if we can find them.

McNamara:

And, is it correct that there is outside of Havana, uh, an installation that appears to be hardened that might be the type of installation they would use for nuclear warheads, uh, and therefore is a, a, prospective source of such warheads?

Lundahl:

Sir, I couldn't put my finger on that. Uh, the Joint Atomic Energy people may be looking at that and forming a judgment, but from photos alone I cannot attest to that.

Carter?:

There would appear to be little need for putting this type of missile in there, however, unless it were associated with nuclear warheads.

Rusk:

[Word unintelligible] don't you have to assume these are nuclear?

McNamara:

Oh, I think . . .

Speaker ?:

[Words unintelligible]

McNamara:

There's no question about that. The question is one of readiness of the, to fire and--and this is highly critical in forming our plans--that the time between today and the time when the readiness to fire capability develops is a very important thing. To estimate that we need to know where these warheads are, and we have not yet found any probable storage of warheads and hence it seems extremely unlikely that they are now ready to fire or may be ready to fire within a matter of hours or even a day or two.

Lundahl:

*Strategic Air Command. **Photographic Interpretation.

Taylor?: When will those be ready? Some time today?

Lundahl: They're supposed to be in, sir; I think that's right, isn't it, General Carter?

Carter: Yes, it is.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Carter: Radar from Sunday's should be available now. We have done some . . .

Taylor?: Weren't there flights yesterday as well, too?

Carter?: Two flights yesterday.

Taylor?: You have those results . . .

Carter?: . . . results from those now. Yeah.

JFK: Thank you.

Lundahl: Yes, sir.

JFK?: Well, when's there any further flights scheduled?

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Lundahl: There are no more scheduled, sir.

JFK: These flights yesterday, I presume, cover the. . . .

Carter?: [Words unintelligible]

Bundy?: We hope so, sir, because the weather won't have been clear all along the island, so we can't claim that we will have been. . . . Certainly [words unintelligible] surely do not have up-to-date photographic coverage on the whole island. I should think one of our first questions is to . . .

Speaker ?: Or [words unintelligible].

Bundy?: . . . consider whether we should not authorize more flights on the basis of COMOR* priorities. There's a specific question of whether we want a closer and sharper look at this, this area. That, however, I think should be looked at in the context of the question whether we wish to give tactical warning, any other possible activities.

McNamara: I would recommend, Mr. President, that you authorize such flights as are considered necessary to obtain complete coverage of the island. Now, this seems to be ill-defined, but I purposely define it that way because we're running into cloud cover on some of these flights, and I would suggest that we simply repeat the flight if we have cloud cover and repeat it sufficiently often to, to obtain the coverage we require.

JFK: [Are your thoughts good?] on that?

Carter?: Yes, sir.

Rusk?: Interestingly . . .

McNamara: Now, this is X, this is U-2 flying . . .

Carter: U-2, sir.

McNamara: . . . specifically excludes the question that Mac-raised of low-level flying which I think that we ought to take up later . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

McNamara: . . . after our further discussions on . . .

Speaker ?: I agree.

McNamara: . . . these possibilities here.

Lundahl: I have one additional note, sir, if I may offer it.

JFK: In other words, the only missile base . . .

Speaker ?: Inter-, intermediate-range missile . . .

JFK: . . . missile base that we now know about is this one?

Lundahl or

Carter?: Correct.

JFK or Taylor?: Is this one or two? This is one . . .

Carter?: There's three of them.

Lundahl: Three, sir.

Speaker ?: Three that are associated.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Bundy: Do I understand that this is a battalion, as you estimate it, Mr. Graybeal?

Graybeal: Yes, sir. We estimate that four missiles make up a battalion, uh, so that in this one that you're looking at, Mr. President, has eight missiles. That'd be two battalions [off?/word unintelligible] size. This one in front of the table is a second separate installation from which we can see six missiles. So there are probably two more battalions there. The other missiles may be under the tree. The third installation has the tents, but there are no missiles identified anywhere in that area.

Speaker ?: Okay.

JFK: These are the only ones we now know about?

Graybeal: Yes, sir.

Speaker ?: Other than those cruise missiles . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]/[thanks?].

Speaker ?: . . . that you're familiar with, those coastal pens and the surface to air missiles.

Speaker ?: Any intelligence on that thing?

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: Secretary Rusk?

Rusk: Yes. [Well?], Mr. President, this is a, of course, a [widely?] serious development. It's one that we, all of us, had not really believed the Soviets could, uh, carry this far. Uh, they, uh, seemed to be denying that they were going to establish bases of their own [in the same?/words unintelligible] with a Soviet base, thus making it [essential to or essentially?] Cuban point of view. The Cubans couldn't [word unintelligible] with it anyhow, so. . . . Now, uh, I do think we have to set in motion a chain of events that will eliminate this base. I don't think we [can?] sit still. The questioning becomes whether we do it by sudden, unannounced strike of some sort, or we, uh, build up the crisis to the point where the other side has to consider very seriously about giving in, or, or even the Cubans themselves, uh, take some, take some action on this. The thing that I'm, of course, very conscious of is that there is no such thing, I think, as unilateral action by the United States. It's so [eminently or heavily?] involved with 42 allies and confrontation in many places, that any action that we take, uh, will greatly increase the risks of direct action involving, uh, our other alliances and our other forces in other parts of the world. Uhm, so I think we, we have to think very hard about two major, uh, courses of action as alternatives. One is the quick strike. The point where we [make or think?], that is

the, uh, overwhelming, overriding necessity to take all the risks that are involved doing that. I don't think this in itself would require an invasion of Cuba. I think that with or without such an invasion, in other words if we make it clear that, uh, what we're doing is eliminating this particular base or any other such base that is established. We ourselves are not moved to general war, we're simply doing what we said we would do if they took certain action. Uh, or we're going to decide that this is the time to eliminate the Cuban problem by actual eliminate the island.

The other would be, if we have a few days--from the military point of view, if we have the whole time--uh, then I would think that, uh, there would be another course of action, a combination of things that, uh, we might wish to consider. Uhm, first, uh, that we, uh, stimulate the OAS* procedure immediately for prompt action to make it quite clear that the entire hemisphere considers that the Rio Pact has been violated and actually? what acts should we take or be taken? in, under the terms of the Rio Pact. The OAS could constitute itself an organ of consultation promptly, although maybe, it may take two or three days to get, uh, instructions from governments and things of that sort. The OAS could, I suppose, at any moment, uh, take action to insist to the Cubans that an OAS inspection, uh, team be permitted to come and, itself, look directly at these sites, provide assurances? to the hemisphere. That will undoubtedly be turned down, but it will be another step in building up the, uh, building a position.

I think also that we ought to consider getting some word to Castro, perhaps through the Canadian ambassador in Havana or through, uh, his representative at the U.N. Uh, I think perhaps the Canadian ambassador would be the best, the better channel to get to Castro apart? privately and tell him that, uh, this is no longer support for Cuba, that Cuba is being victimized here, and that, uh, the Soviets are preparing Cuba for destruction or betrayal.

You saw the Times** story yesterday morning that high Soviet officials were saying, "We'll trade Cuba for Berlin." This ought to be brought to Castro's attention. It ought to be said to Castro that, uh, this kind of a base is intolerable and not acceptable. The time has now come when he must take the interests of the Cuban people, must now break clearly with the Soviet Union, prevent this missile base from becoming operational.

And I think there are certain military, uhm, uh, actions that we could, we might well want to take straight away. First, to, uh, to call up, uh, highly selective units no more than? 150,000. Unless we feel that it's better, more desirable to go to a general national emergency so that we have complete freedom of action. If we announce, at the time that we announce this development--and I think we do have to announce this development some time this week--

*Organization of American States. **New York Times.

uh, we announce that, uh, we are conducting a surveillance of Cuba, over Cuba, and we will enforce our right to do so. We reject the mission of secrecy in this hemisphere in any matters of this sort. We, we reinforce our forces in Guantanamo. We reinforce our forces in the southeastern part of the United States--whatever is necessary from the military point of view to be able to give, to deliver an overwhelming strike at any of these installations, including the SAM sites. And, uh, also, to take care of any, uh, MIGs or bombers that might make a pass at Miami or at the United States. Build up heavy forces, uh, if those are not already in position.

I think also that we need a few days, uhm, to alert our other allies, for consultation with NATO. I'll assume that we can move on this line at the same time to interrupt all air traffic from free world countries going into Cuba, insist to the Mexicans, the Dutch, that they stop their planes from coming in. Tell the British, who, and anyone else who's involved at this point, that, uh, if they're interested in peace, they've got to stop their ships from Cuban trade at this point. Uh, in other words, isolate Cuba completely without at this particular moment a, uh, a forceful blockade.

I think it would be important to use the, uh, consider, uh, calling in General Eisenhower,* giving him a full briefing before a public announcement is made as to the situation and the [forcible?] action which you might determine upon.

But I think that, by and large, there are, there are these two broad alternatives: one, the quick strike; the other, to alert our allies and Mr. Khrushchev** that there is utterly serious crisis in the making here, and that, uh. . . . Mr. Khrushchev may not himself really understand that or believe that at this point. I think we'll be facing a situation that could well lead to general war; that we have an obligation to do what has to be done but do it in a way that gives, uh, everybody a chance to, uh, put the [word] unintelligible/ down before it gets too hard. Those are my, my reactions of this morning, Mr. President. I naturally need to

*Dwight D. Eisenhower. **Nikita S. Khrushchev.

think about this very hard for the next several hours, uh, what I and what my colleagues at the State Department can do about it.

McNamara:

Mr. President, there are a number of unknowns in this situation I want to comment upon, and, in relation to them, I would like to outline very briefly some possible military alternatives and ask General Taylor to expand upon them.

But before commenting on either the unknowns or outlining some military alternatives, there are two propositions I would suggest that we ought to accept as, uh, foundations for our further thinking. My first is that if we are to conduct an air strike against these installations, or against any part of Cuba, we must agree now that we will schedule that prior to the time these missile sites become operational. I'm not prepared to say when that will be, but I think it is extremely important that our talk and our discussion be founded on this premise: that any air strike will be planned to take place prior to the time they become operational. Because, if they become operational before the air strike, I do not believe we can state we can knock them out before they can be launched; and if they're launched there is almost certain to be, uh, chaos in part of the east coast or the area, uh, in a radius of six hundred to a thousand miles from Cuba.

Uh, secondly, I, I would submit the proposition that any air strike must be directed not solely against the missile sites, but against the missile sites plus the airfields plus the aircraft which may not be on the airfields but hidden by that time plus all potential nuclear storage sites. Now, this is a fairly extensive air strike. It is not just a strike against the missile sites; and there would be associated with it potential casualties of Cubans, not of U.S. citizens, but potential casualties of Cubans in, at least in the hundreds, more likely in the low thousands, say two or three thousand. It seems to me these two propositions, uh, should underlie our, our discussion.

Now, what kinds of military action are we capable of carrying out and what may be some of the consequences? Uh, we could carry out an air strike within a matter of days. We would be ready for the start of such an air strike within, within a matter of days. If it were absolutely essential, it could be done almost literally within a matter of hours. I believe the chiefs would prefer that it be deferred for a matter of days, but we are prepared for that quickly. The air strike could continue for a matter of days following the initial day, if necessary. Uh, presumably there would be some political discussions taking place either just before the air strike or both before and during. In any event, we would be prepared, following the air strike, for an air, invasion, both by air and by sea. ~~There would be~~ after the start of the air strike, that would be possible if the political environment made it desirable or necessary at that time. [Fine?] Associated with this air strike undoubtedly should be some degree of mobilization. Uh, I would think of the mobilization coming not before the air

strike but either concurrently with or somewhat following, say possibly five days afterwards, depending upon the possible invasion requirements. The character of the mobilization would be such that it could be carried out in its first phase at least within the limits of the authority granted by Congress. There might have to be a second phase, and then it would require a declaration of a national emergency.

Now, this is very sketchily the military, uh, capabilities, and I think you may wish to hear General Taylor, uh, outline his choice.

Speaker ?: Almost too [words unintelligible] to Cuba.

Speaker ?: Yes.

Taylor: Uh, we're impressed, Mr. President, with the great importance of getting a, a strike with all the benefit of surprise, uh, which would mean ideally that we would have all the missiles that are in Cuba above ground where we can take them out. Uh, that, that desire runs counter to the strong point the secretary made if the other optimum would be to get every missile before it could, becomes operational. Uh, practically, I think the, our knowledge of the timing of the readiness is going to be so, so, uh, difficult that we'll never have the, the exact permanent, uh, the perfect timing. What we'd like to do is to look at this new photography, I think--and take any additional--and try to get the, the, layout of the targets in as near an optimum, uh, position as possible, and then take 'em out without any warning whatsoever. That does not preclude, I don't think, Mr. Secretary, some of the things you've been talking about. It's a little hard to say in terms of time how much I'm discussing. But we must do a good job the first time we go in there, uh, pushing a 100 percent just as far, as closely as we can with our, with our strike. I'm having all the responsible planners in this afternoon, Mr. President, at four o'clock, to talk this out with 'em and get their best judgment.

I would also mention among the, the military actions we should take that once we have destroyed as many of these offensive weapons as possible, we should, we should prevent any more coming in, which means a naval blockade. So I suppose that all. . . . And also a reinforcement of Guantanamo and evacuation of dependents. So, really, the, in point of time, I'm, I'm thinking in terms of three phases.

One, a, an initial pause of some sort while we get completely ready and get, get the right posture on the part of the target, so we can do the best job. Then, virtually concurrently, a air strike against, as the secretary said, missiles, airfields, uh, nuclear sites that we know of. At the same time, naval blockade. At the same time, reinforce Guantanamo and evacuate the dependents. I'd then start this continuous reconnaissance, the list that you had, continue over Cuba.

Then, then the decision can be made as we, as we're mobilizing, uh, with the air strike as to whether we invade or not. I think that's the hardest question militarily in the whole business--one which we should look at very closely before we get our feet in that deep mud in Cuba.

Rusk: There are st-, one or two things, Mr. President, uh. Gromyko* asked to see you Thursday. Uh, it may be of some interest to know what he says about this, if he says anything. He may be bringing a message on this subject. Uh, but that. . . . I just want to remind you that you are seeing him and that may be relevant to this /topic?/. I might say incidentally, sir, that you delay anything else you have to do at this point.

Secondly, I don't believe, myself, that the critical question is whether you get a particular missile before it goes off because if they shoot those missiles we are in general nuclear war. In other words, the Soviet Union has got quite a different decision to make. If they, if they shoot those missiles, want to shoot 'em off before they get knocked out by aircraft. . . . So, I'm not sure that this is, uh, necessarily the precise /critical?/ element, Bob.

McNamara: Well, I would strongly emphasize that I think our time should be based on the assumption it is, Dean. We don't know what kinds of communications the Soviets have with those sites. We don't know what kinds of control they have over the warheads.

Rusk: Yes, /words unintelligible/. . .

McNamara: If we saw a warhead on the site and we knew that that launcher was capable of launching that warhead, I would. . . . Frankly, I would strongly urge against the air attack, to be quite frank about it, because I think the danger to this country in relation to the gain that would accrue with the excessive /time?/. . . . This is why I suggest that if we're talking about an air attack, I believe we should consider it only on the assumption that we can carry it off before these become operational.

JFK: What is the, uh, advant-. . . . Must be some major reason for the Russians to, uh, set this up as a. . . . Must be that they're not satisfied with their ICBMs. What'd be the reason that they would, uh. . . .

Taylor: What it'd give 'em is primary, it makes the launching base, uh, for short range missiles against the United States to supplement their rather /deceptive?/ ICBM system, for example. There's one reason.

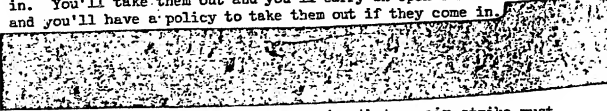
JFK: Of course, I don't see how we could prevent further ones from coming in by submarine.

*Andrei A. Gromyko.

Taylor: Well, I think that that thing is all over . . .

JFK: I mean if we let 'em blockade the thing, they come in by submarine.

McNamara: Well, I think the only way to prevent them coming in, quite frankly, is to say you'll take them out the moment they come in. You'll take them out and you'll carry on open surveillance and you'll have a policy to take them out if they come in.

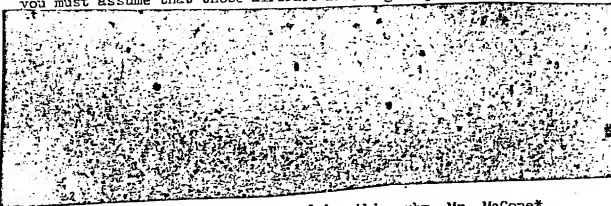


Bundy: Are you absolutely clear of your premise that an air strike must go to the whole air complex?

McNamara: Well, we are, Mac . . .

Bundy: . . . air complex? [Appears to be a repeat of the words above.]

McNamara: . . . because we are fearful of these MIG 21s. We don't know where they are. We don't know what they're capable of. If there are nuclear warheads associated with the launchers, you must assume there will be nuclear warheads associated with aircraft. Even if there are not nuclear warheads associated with aircraft, you must assume that those aircraft have high explosive potential.



Rusk: Still, about why the Soviets are doing this, uh, Mr. McCone* suggested some weeks ago that one thing Mr. Khrushchev may have in mind is that, uh, uh, he knows that we have a substantial nuclear superiority, but he also knows that we don't really live under fear of his nuclear weapons to the extent that, uh, he has to live under fear of ours. Also we have nuclear weapons nearby, in Turkey and places like that. Uhm. . . .

JFK: How many weapons do we have in Turkey?

Taylor?: We have Jupiter missiles . . .

Bundy?: Yeah. We have how many?

McNamara?: About fifteen, I believe it is.

Bundy?: I think that's right. I think that's right.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Rusk: But then there are also delivery vehicles that are, could easily
...

McNamara: Aircraft.

Rusk: ... be moved through the air, aircraft and so forth.

Speaker ?: Route 'em through Turkey.

Rusk: Uhm, and that Mr. McCone expresses the view that Khrushchev may feel that it's important for us to learn about living under medium-range missiles, and he's doing that to sort of balance that, uh, that political, psychological [plank?]. I think also that, uh, Berlin is, uh, very much involved in this. Uhm, for the first time, I'm beginning really to wonder whether maybe Mr. Khrushchev is entirely rational about Berlin. We've [hardly?] talked about his obsession with it. And I think we have to, uh, keep our eye on that element. But, uh, they may be thinking that they can either bargain Berlin and Cuba against each other, or that they could provoke us into a kind of action in Cuba which would give an umbrella for them to take action with respect to Berlin. In other words like the Suez-Hungary combination. If they could provoke us into taking the first overt action, then the world would be confused and they would have, uh, what they would consider to be justification for making a move somewhere else. But, uh, I must say I don't really see the rationality of, uh, the Soviets' pushing it this far unless they grossly misunderstand the importance of Cuba to this country.

Bundy: It's important, I think, to recognize that they did make this decision, as far as our estimates now go, in early summer, and, this has been happening since August. Their Tass statement of September 12, which the experts, I think, attribute very strongly to Khrushchev himself, is all mixed up on this point. It has a rather explicit statement, "The harmless military equipment sent to Cuba designed exclusively for defense, defensive purposes. The president of the United States and the American military, the military of any country know what means of defense are. How can these means threaten United States?"

Now there, it's very hard to reconcile that with what has happened. The rest, as the secretary says, has many comparisons between Cuba and Italy, Turkey and Japan. We have other evidence that Khrushchev is, honestly believes, or, at least affects to believe that we have nuclear weapons in, in Japan, that combination, [word unintelligible] ...

Rusk: Gromyko stated that in his press conference the other day, too,

Bundy: Yeah. They may mean Okinawa.

Speaker ?: Fight.

McNamara: It's not likely, but it's conceivable the nuclear warheads for these launchers are not yet on Cuban soil.

Bundy: Now that seems to me that's. . . . It's perfectly possible that this, that they are in that sense a bluff. That doesn't make them any less offensive to us. . . .

McNamara: No.

Bundy: . . . because we can't have proof about it.

McNamara: No, but it does possibly indicate a different course of action. . . .

Bundy: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . and therefore, while I'm not suggesting how we should handle this, I think this is one of the most important actions we should take: to ascertain the location of the nuclear warheads for these missiles. Later in the discussion we can revert back to this. There are several alternative ways of approaching it.

JFK: Doug, do you have any. . . .

Dillon: No. The only thing I'd, would say is that, uh, this alternative course of, of warning, getting, uh, public opinion, uh, OAS action and telling people in NATO and everything like that, would appear to me to have the danger of, uh, getting us wide out in the open and forcing the Russians to, uh, Soviets to take a, a position that if anything was done, uh, they would, uh, have to retaliate. Whereas, uh, a, a quick action, uh, with a statement at the same time saying this is all there is to it, might give them a chance to, uh, back off and not do anything. Meanwhile, I think that the chance of getting through this thing without a Russian reaction is greater under a quick, uh, strike than, uh, building the whole thing up to a, a climax then going through. . . . [It will be a lot of debate on it?]

Rusk: That is, of course, a possibility, but, uh. . . .

Bundy: The difficulties--I, I share the secretary of the treasury's feeling a little bit--the difficulties of organizing the OAS and NATO; the amount of noise we would get from our allies saying that, uh, they can live with Soviet MRBMs, why can't we; uh, the division in the alliance; the certainty that the Germans would feel that we were jeopardizing Berlin because of our concern over Cuba. The prospect of that pattern is not an appetizing one. . . .

Rusk: Yes, but you see. . . .

Bundy: [words unintelligible]

Rusk: . . . uh, uh, everything turns crucially on what happens.

Bundy: I agree, Mr. Secretary.

Rusk: And if we go with the quick strike, then, in fact, they do back it up, then you've exposed all of your allies [word unintelligible], ourselves to all these great dangers without . . .

Bundy: You get all these noises again.

Rusk: . . . without, uh, the slightest consultation or, or warning or preparation.

JFK: But, of course, warning them, uh, it seems to me, is warning everybody. And I, I, obviously you can't sort of announce that in four days from now you're going to take them out. They may announce within three days they're going to have warheads on 'em; if we come and attack, they're going to fire them. Then what'll, what'll we do? Then we don't take 'em out. Of course, we then announce, well, if they do that, then we're going to attack with nuclear weapons.

Dillon: Yes, sir, that's the question that nobody, I didn't understand, nobody had mentioned, is whether this s-, uh, "take-out," this mission, uh, was [word unintelligible] to deal with . . .

Speaker ?: I don't know.

Dillon: . . . high explosives?

Speaker ?: High explosives, yes.

JFK: How effective can the take-out be, do they think?

Taylor?: It'll never be a 100 percent, Mr. President, we know. Uh, we hope to take out a vast majority in the first strike, but this is not just one thing, one strike, one day, but continuous air attack for whenever necessary, whenever we di-, discover a target.

Bundy: They're now talking about taking out the air force as well. . . .

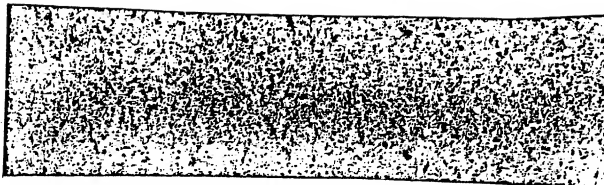
Speaker ?: I [could tell you that in the staff?].

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Bundy: I do raise again the question whether, uh, whether we [words unintelligible] the problem, military problem, but there is, I would think, a substantial political advantage in limiting the strike in surgical terms to the thing that is in fact the cause of action.

McNamara?:





- Taylor: Well, I would think we would have, should be in a position to invade at any time if we so desired. Hence that, uh, in this preliminary, we should be, uh, it's all bonus if we are indeed taking out weapons [word unintelligible] . . .
- JFK: Well, let's say we just take out the missile bases, then, uh, they have some more there. Obviously they can get 'em in by submarine and so on. I don't know whether you, you just can't keep high strikes on.
- Taylor: I suspect, Mr. President, we'd have to take out the surface-to-air missiles in order to get in, to get in, take some of them out. Maybe [words unintelligible].
- JFK: How long will, do we estimate this will remain secure, this, uh, information, uh, people have it?
- Bundy: In terms of the tightness of our intelligence control, Mr. President, I think we are in unusually and fortunately good position. We set up a, uh, new security classification governing precisely the field of offensive capability in Cuba just five days ago, four days ago, under General Carter. That, uh, limits this, uh, to people who have an immediate, operational necessity in intelligence terms to work on the data and the people who have . . .
- JFK: How many would that be, about?
- Bundy: Oh, that will be a very large number, but that's not generally where leaks come from. Uh, the more [important?] limitation is that only officers with the policy responsibility for advice directly to you'll receive this . . .
- JFK: How many would get it over in the Defense Department, General, with your meeting this afternoon?
- Taylor: Well, I was going to mention that. We'd have to ask for relaxation of the ground rules, uh, that, that Mac has just enunciated, so that I can, uh, give it to the senior commanders who are involved in the plans.
- JFK: Would that be about fifty?

Taylor: By then. . . . No, sir. I would say that, uh, within, at this stage ten more.

McNamara: Well, Mr. President, I, I think, to be realistic, we should assume that this will become fairly widely known, if not in the newspapers, at least by political representatives of both parties within--I would, I'm just picking a figure--I'd say a week.

[Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible.]

McNamara: And I say that because we have, we have taken action already that is raising questions in people's minds. Normally, when a U-2 comes back, we duplicate the films. The duplicated copies go to a series of commands. A copy goes to SAC. A copy goes to CINCLANT.* A copy goes to CIA. And normally, uh, the photo interpreters and the, and the operational officers in these commands are looking forward to these. We have stopped all that, and this, this type of information is going on throughout the department. And I, I doubt very much that we can keep this out of the hands of, uh, of members of Congress, for example, for more than a week.

Rusk: Well, Senator Keating** has already, in effect, announced it on the floor of the Senate.

Bundy: Senator Keating said this on the floor of the Senate on the tenth of October . . .

Rusk: [That's correct?]

Bundy: . . . "Construction has begun on at least a half-dozen launching sites for intermediate range tactical missiles."

Rusk: Well, that's, that's the way that [words unintelligible]. I think we can count on announcing it not later than Thursday or Friday of this week.

Taylor?:

JFK: Is he the one who's giving Keating his stuff?

Taylor?: We don't know.

Bundy: My question, Mr. President, is whether as a matter of, uh, tactics we ought not to interview Senator Keating and check out his data. Seem to me that that ought to be done in a routine sort of way by an open officer of the intelligence agency.

Speaker ?: I think that's [right?].

JFK: You have any thoughts, Mr. Vice President?

*Commander-in-chief, U.S. Forces Atlantic. **Kenneth B. Keating.

Johnson:

I agree with Mac that that ought to be done. I think that, uh, we're committed at any time that we feel that there's a build up that in any way endangers to take whatever action we must take to assure our security. I would think the secretary's evaluation of this thing being around all over the lot is a pretty accurate one, I would think it'd take a week to do it. Maybe a little before then.

I would, uh, like to hear what the responsible commanders have to say this afternoon. I think the question with the base is whether we take it out or whether we talk about it, and, uh, both, either alternative is a very distressing one, but of the two, I would take it out.

JFK:

Well, uh, the, uh . . .

Johnson:

Assuming these commanders felt that way. I'm fearful if we. . . . I spent the weekend with the ambassadors of the Organization of American States. I think this organization is fine, but I don't think, I don't rely on 'em much for any strength in anything like this. And, I, the fact that we're talking about our other allies, uh, I take the position that Mr. Bundy says, We ought to be living all these years with words unintelligible get your blood pressure up. But the fact is the country's blood pressure is up and they are fearful, and they're insecure, and we're getting divided, and, uh, I don't think that, uh. . . . I take this little State Department Bulletin that you sent out to all the congressmen. One, one of the points you make--that any time the build up endangers or threatens our security in any way, we're going to do whatever must be done immediately to protect our own security. And when you say that, why the, give unanimous support. People are really concerned about this, in my opinion. Uh, I think we have to be prudent and cautious, talk to the commanders and see what they say, what they're. . . . I'm not much for circularizing it over the Hill or our allies, even though I realize it's a breach of faith. It's the one not to confer with them. We're not going to get much help out of them.

Bundy:

There is an intermediate position. There are perhaps two or three of our principal allies or heads of government we could communicate, at least on a 24-hour notice basis. Certainly ease, ease the . . .

Johnson:

Take a large? words unintelligible to? stop the planes, stop the ships, stop the submarines and everything else from sending?. Just not going to permit it. And then stop them from coming in.


Speaker ?:

Yeah.

JFK:

Uh, eh, well, this, which. . . . What you're really talking about are two or three different, uh, tense? operations. One is the strike just on this, these three bases. One, the second is the broader one that Secretary McNamara was talking about, which is on the airfields and on the SAM sites and on anything else connected

with, uh, missiles. Third is doing both of those things and also at the same time launching a blockade, which requires really the, uh, the, uh, third and which is a larger step. And then, as I take it, the fourth question is the, uh, degree of consultation.



Speaker ?:

Uhm.

JFK:

Just have to [words unintelligible] and do it. Probably ought to tell them, though, the night before.

RFK:

Mr. President.

JFK:

Yes.

RFK:

We have the fifth one, really, which is the invasion. I would say that, uh, you're dropping bombs all over Cuba if you do the second, uh, air, the airports, knocking out their planes, dropping it on all their missiles. You're covering most of Cuba. You're going to kill an awful lot of people, and, uh, we're going to take an awful lot of heat on it . . .

Speaker ?:

Yeah.

RFK:

. . . and, uh, and then, uh, you know, the heat, you're going to announce the reason that you're doing it is because, uh, they're sending in these kind of missiles. Well, I would think it's almost incumbent upon the Russians, then, to say, Well, we're going to send them in again, and if you do it again, we're going to do, we're going to do the same thing to Turkey, or We're going to do the same thing to Iran.

Speaker ?:

Do they have the . . .

JFK:

I don't believe it takes us, at least, uh. . . . How long did it take to get in a position where we can invade Cuba? Almost a month? Two months?

McNamara:

No, sir.

Speaker ?:

Right on the beach . . .

McNamara:



JFK:

Taylor:

JFK:

Speaker ?:

Taylor:

McNamara:

JFK:

Taylor: Uh, at least it's enough to start the thing going. And I would say it would be, who. . . . It ought to be enough.

McNamara: Particularly if it isn't directed initially on Havana, the Havana area. Uh, this is a variant. General Taylor and, uh . . .

JFK: We haven't any real report on what the state of the popular reaction would be to all this, do we? We don't know whether . . .

Taylor: They'd be greatly confused, don't you think?

JFK: What?

Taylor: Great, great confusion and panic, do you think . . .

Carter?: Well, it's very hard to evaluate the effect [words unintelligible].

Speaker ? : Right, right.

McNamara: Sometime today, I think, [at?] the State Department, we will want to consider that. There's a real possibility you'd have to invade. If you carried out an air strike, this might lead to an uprising such that in order to prevent the slaughter of, of, uh, of the free Cubans, we would have to invade to, to, uh, reintroduce order into the country. And we would be prepared to do that.

Rusk: I would rather think if there were a, a complete air strike against all air forces, you might as well do it, do the whole job.

JFK: Well, let's, uh, decide what we ought to be doing . . .

RFK: Could I raise one more question?

JFK: Yeah.

RFK:

Taylor:

If you give less, you, you run the risk of, of giving up surprise. If you start moving your troops around in order to, to reduce that [words unintelligible] . . .

RFK:

Yeah. The only thing is, there, there's been so much attention on Berlin in the last. . . . Would you have to move them so that everybody would know it was Cubans?

Taylor:

McNamara:

Uh, may I suggest the fact that we, we mentioned this other plan was talked about. We should be prepared for a series of eventualities after the air strike starts. I think it's not probable, but it's conceivable that the air strike would trigger a nation-wide uprising.

Taylor:

McNamara:

Speaker ?:

Well . . .

RFK:

JFK:

But und-. . . . The, the problem is, as I understand it. . . . You've got two problems. One is how much time we've got on these particular missiles before they're ready to go.

McNamara?:

Right.

JFK:

Do we have two weeks? If we had two weeks, we could lay on all this and have it all ready to go, but un-, the question really is is whether we can wait two weeks.

Speaker ?:

Yeah.

Taylor:

I don't think we'll ever know, Mr. President, these operational

questions because, uh, this type of missile, uh, can be launched very quickly with a concealed expedience.

Bundy: Do we have any . . .

Taylor: So that . . .

Bundy: . . . intelligence, uh . . .

Taylor: . . . even today, this, this one, uh, area, might be operational. I can see that it's, it's highly [words unintelligible] . . .

Bundy: One very important question is whether there are other areas which conceivably might be even more operational that we have not identified.

McNamara: This is why I think the moment we leave here, Mac, we just have to take this new authority we have and put it . . .

Bundy: May I ask General Carter

Carter: That's right. That's why we specifically covered this area on the one Sunday because the [words unintelligible], you see . . .

McNamara:

JFK:

McNamara:

Taylor: It would take place after the air strike.

McNamara: We, we, we have been moving already, on a very quiet basis, munitions and POL. We will have by the twentieth, which is Friday, I guess, we will have stocks of munitions, stocks of POL pre-positioned in the southeast part of this country. So that kind of movement is beginning . . .

JFK: What's POL, uh?

McNamara: Petroleum, oil, lubricants. So that kind of movement has already been taking place and it's been possible to do it quietly.

JFK: What about armor and so on? What about all the . . .

McNamara:



Taylor: I think our point of view may change somewhat because of an adjustment here. The decision would take out only the known missile sites and not the airfields. There is a great danger of, of equipment dispersal of all the, the interesting aircraft. Uh, you'd be in surprise, there's [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Taylor: Missiles can't run off quite, quite as readily.

JFK: The advant-, what is. . . . The advantage of taking out these airplanes would be to protect us against a reprisal . . .

Taylor: Yes.

JFK: . . . by them. I would think you'd have to pre-, assume they'd be using, uh, iron bombs and not nuclear weapons because obviously why would the Soviets permit nuclear war to begin under that sort of half-assed way?

McNamara: I think that's reasonable.

Speaker ?: But they still . . .

Speaker ?: But they have . . .

Speaker ?: . . . have ten IL-28s and twenty . . .

Speaker ?: Yes. Yes. They may carry out [words unintelligible]. Yes.

Speaker ?: . . . twenty-five big ones.

JFK: So you think that if we're going to take out the, uh, missile sites you'd want to take out these planes at the same time?

Carter?: There are eight airfields that are capable of mounting these jets. Eight [words unintelligible] . . .

Bundy: But politically, if you're trying to get him to understand the limit and the non-limit and make it as easy for him as possible,

there's an enormous premium on having a small, as small and clear-cut an action as possible, against the hazard of, uh, going after all the operational airfields becomes a kind of . . .

JFK: General.

Taylor?: I wonder if we could get, uh . . .

Bundy: . . . [words unintelligible] nuclear war.

Taylor?: . . . the number of hours required for each type of air strike, if we were just going for . . .

Carter?: Yeah, sure, sure.

JFK: Well, now, what is it, uh, we have, what is it we want to, we need to do in the next 24 hours to prepare for any of these three? It seems to me that we want to do more or less the same things no matter what we finally decide [words unintelligible] . . .

Bundy: We've authorized, Mr. President, we have a decision for additional intelligence reconnaissance, a minor decision that we'll talk to Keating. Seems [like?] . . .

JFK: I don't think Keating . . .

Bundy: No.

JFK: . . . will be that helpful.

Bundy: Leave that out.

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: I think that'll, then he'll be saying afterwards that we tried to . . .

Bundy: All right, the next, uh. . . .

RFK: . . . dun him.

Bundy: I should think we need to know the, the earliest readiness for the various sizes of air strike and how long they would take to execute.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: [The medium?] probability . . .

Dillon: One other question is What, if anything, has to be done, uh, to be prepared for, uh, eventuality of a Soviet action?

JFK?: And then I think what we ought to do . . .

McNamara?: What sort of alert to do . . .

JFK?: . . . is to figure out what are the minimum number of people that we really have to tell.

Bundy: Right.
You've got to tell, it seems to me you're going to have to tell SACEUR*** . . .

JFK: Uhm.

Bundy: . . . and, uh, and the commandant.

Dillon: I would think this business about the Soviet reaction, that there, that might be helpful, uh, if we could maybe take some, uh, general war preparation type of action that would show them that we're ready if they want to start anything, without what you might, with starting anything.

Bundy: One. . . .

Dillon: You just don't know.

Bundy: On this track, one obvious element on the political side is do we say something simultaneously or, uh, to the Cubans, to the Soviets, or do we let the action speak for itself?

Rusk: This point whether we say something to the Cubans and the Soviets before any, before . . .

JFK: I think we ought to, what we ought to do is, is, uh, after this meeting this afternoon, we ought to meet tonight again at six, consider these various, uh, proposals. In the meanwhile, we'll go ahead with this maximum, whatever is needed from the flights, and, in addition, we will. . . . I don't think we got much time on these missiles. They may be. . . . So it may be that we just have to, we can't wait two weeks while we're getting ready to, to roll. Maybe just have to just take them out, and continue our other preparations if we decide to do that. That may be where we end up. I think we ought to, beginning right now, be preparing to. . . . Because that's what we're going to do anyway. We're certainly going to do number one; we're going to take out these, uh, missiles. Uh, the questions will be whether, which, what I would describe as number two, which would be a general air strike. That we're not ready to say, but we should be in preparation for it. The third is the, is the, uh, the general invasion. At least we're going to do number one, so it seems to me that we don't have to wait very long. We, we ought to be making those preparations.

Bundy: You want to be clear, Mr. President, whether we have definitely decided against a political track. I, myself, think we ought . . .

Taylor?: Well, we'll have . . .

Bundy: . . . to work out a contingency on that.

Taylor?: We, we'll develop both tracks.

JFK: [REDACTED] We ought to just decide who we talk to and how long ahead and how many people, really, in the government. There's going to be a difference between those who know that--this will leak out in the next few days--there are these, uh, uh, bases, until we say or the Pentagon or State won't be harsh. We've already said it on the [words unintelligible]. So we, let's say, we've got two or three days.

Bundy: Well, let's play it, shall we play it still harder and, uh, simply say that there's no evidence and that we have to . . .

JFK: We ought to stick the battle till we want to do something.

Bundy: . . . [words unintelligible] [REDACTED] [words unintelligible].

JFK: Otherwise we give ourselves away, so let's . . .

Bundy: May I make one other cover plan suggestion . . .

JFK: Yes.

Bundy: . . . Mr. President? There will be meetings in the White House. I think the best we can do is to keep the people with a specific Latin American business black and describe the rest as "intensive budget review sessions," but I haven't been able to think of any other . . .

JFK: Nobody, it seems to me, in the State Department. I discussed the matter with, uh, Bohlen* of the Soviet bloc and told him he could talk to Thompson.** So that's those two. It seems to me that there's no one else in the State Department that ought to be talked to about it . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] in the department.

JFK: . . . in any level at all, and, uh, until we know a little more. And then, as I say, in Defense we've got to keep it as tight as possible . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: . . . particularly what we're going to do about it. Maybe a lot of people know about what's there, but what we're going to do about it really ought to be, you know, the tightest of all because otherwise we bitch it up.

*Charles E. Bohlen. **Llewellyn E. Thompson.

McNamara: Mr. President, may I suggest that we come back this afternoon prepared to, to answer three questions. First, should we surface our surveillance? I think this is a very important . . .

Speaker ?: Very important point.

McNamara: . . . question at the moment. We ought to try to decide today either yes or no.

JFK: By "surface our" . . .

McNamara: I mean should we state publicly . . .

JFK?: Oh.

McNamara: . . . that, that you have stated we will, we'll act to take out any offensive weapons. In order to be certain as to whether there are or are not offensive weapons, we are scheduling U-2 flights or other surveillance . . .

Carter?: What's the [skull number, commissar?]. [Laughs]

McNamara: . . . or reconnaissance flights to, uh, to obtain this information. We'll make the information, uh, public.

JFK: There may not be one. All right, why not?

McNamara: This is one question. A second question is Should we precede the military action with political action? If so, on what, uh, timing? I would think the answer's almost certainly yes. And I wouldn't, I would think particularly of the contacts with Khrushchev. And I would think that if these are to be done, they must be scheduled in terms of time very, very carefully in relation to a potential military action. There must be a very, very precise series of, of contacts with him, and indications of what we'll do at certain times following that. And, thirdly, we should be prepared to answer your questions regarding the, the effect of these strikes and the time required to carry them off. I think . . .

JFK: How long it would take to get 'em organized.

McNamara: E-, e-, exactly. We'll be prepared . . .

JFK: In other words, how many days from tomorrow morning would it. . . . How many mornings from tomorrow morning would it take to get the, to take out just these missile . . .

McNamara: Missile sites, right.

JFK: . . . sites which we, [well?] we need to know now? How long before we get the information about the rest of the island, do you figure, General?

Carter: Could take weeks, Mr. President.

JFK: Weeks?

Speaker ?: Uh . . .

Carter: For complete coverage of a cloud-covered island.

Bundy or
McNamara?: Depending on weather.

Taylor: Well, we, we've got about 80 percent now, don't we word
unintelligible?

Lundahl: Yes, sir. It depends much on what we get out of yesterday's
flight, sir. They won't be words unintelligible . . .

Carter: There are clouded areas, Mr. President . . .

Speaker ?: Right, but there are areas . . .

Carter: . . . as I understand it and there are . . .

Speaker ?: Words unintelligible

Carter: . . . areas that are very substantial . . .

Speaker ?: We'll have a report on those . . .

Carter: . . . in permanent helium?

Speaker ?: . . . covered with clouds over it.

Lundahl: We'll have preliminaries by six o'clock tomorrow morning.

JFK: Well, the top? there is the . . .

Speaker ?: Words unintelligible

JFK: . . . the part of the island that isn't covered by, uh, this
flight we're, uh, by tomorrow morning. What about, uh, doing
that, uh, tomorrow plus the clouded part doing low level? Have
we got a plane that goes . . .

Bundy: We can certainly go low level . . .

Speaker ?: Go low level, lower level words unintelligible . . .

Bundy: . . . and we have been reluctant to do that. The, the one thing
to worry about on low level is that that will create a sense of
tactical alert in the island, and I'm not sure we want to do that.
Our guess is that the high level ones have not, in fact, been
detected.

Taylor: I think that's correct.

Bundy?: No reactions.

JFK: I would think that if we are going to go in and take out this and any others we find that we would, uh, at the same time do a general low level . . .

Bundy: You could at the same time do a low level of [all?] that we have not seen.

JFK: . . . photographic reconnaissance.

Speaker ?: Associated with.

Bundy: That would certainly be sensible.

JFK: Then we would be prepared . . .

Bundy: As a matter of fact . . .

JFK: . . . almost any day to take those out.

Bundy: . . . for evidentiary purposes, uh, someone has made the point this morning, that if we go in on a quick strike, we ought to have a photographic plane take shots of the [hits?].

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Taylor?: I think that's right, that's [words unintelligible].

JFK: All right, well, now, I think we've got to, uh, [word unintelligible] for this for us to be doing anything quickly and quietly and completely that's what we've got to be doing the next two or three days. So we'll meet at six?

Speaker ?: Do you think . . .

RFK: How long. . . . Excuse me. I just wondered how long it would take if you took it and [had? or added?] an invasion?

Taylor: To mount an invasion?

RFK: No, how long would it take to . . .

Speaker ?: What is that . . .

RFK: . . . uh, take over the island?

Taylor: Very hard to estimate, Bobby . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

[There are several conversations going on and only portions of each are intelligible.]

Taylor:

Speaker ?:

McNamara:

Speaker ?:

JFK:

Yeah, so we get some idea about our reception there. I just hate to even waste these six hours, so it may be that we will want to be, uh, doing some movements, uh, in the next six hours, uh . . .

Speaker ? : About the execution of the [launching?]/[words unintelligible]/?

JFK: Yeah.

[Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible.]

JFK: I want to, uh, add [words unintelligible] better also. [I don't know?]/ about you, are you coming to lunch?

Speaker ? : Yeah. Both of us were.

JFK: Who else is supposed to come to lunch?

Rusk: I was supposed to, but, um, [word unintelligible] . . .

JFK: George, are you supposed to come?

Speaker ? : No, no. [He's?]/, see if they've got the [word unintelligible]/.

JFK: Do you want to take [out that?]/?

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible]/, are you supposed to go now?

JFK: Six o'clock tonight?

Speaker ? : Six o'clock.

JFK: All right. Seven o'clock.

Bundy?: Seven, seven is better actually for you, Mr. President. Is six-thirty manageable? That would be still better because you're supposed to be out there at eight.

JFK: Well, that's all right. That's, that's [words unintelligible] then, uh, seven. Between six-thirty and seven. As close to six-thirty as you can be here. How many would there be? I'd like to have, if you add the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff here . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: Well, then you bring who you think ought to be brought.

Bundy: May I urge everybody to use the East Gates rather than the West Gates?

JFK: I think we ought to get. . . . What's Mr. McCone* doing up here, General?

Carter: He's, uh, [burying?] his stepson tomorrow morning back . . .

Speaker ?: He just [threw me?], I just talked with him on the phone. I think he'd rather decide.

JFK: So why don't you, you discussed [words unintelligible]? Is he familiar with this information?

Carter: Yes, sir, he's aware of what has happened.

RFK: I talked with him about an hour ago. [Words unintelligible] here tomorrow morning [words unintelligible]. They're burying the child today, his son.

JFK: . . . is he going to give judgment tonight?

RFK: Well, he asked me to [words unintelligible]. I think we might tell him [words unintelligible]. He said he was going to talk after the meeting, maybe just tell him we had a meeting [words unintelligible].

JFK: All right, now the other question is on, uh, the [words unintelligible] Eisenhower. Where is the General, now?

Speaker ?: Eisenhower. . . .

JFK: I'll take care of that. I'll have [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: I want to get say a list of the [words unintelligible] of the [words unintelligible] the president [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: It's too complicated to . . .

Rusk: George.

Speaker ?: George.

Rusk: The president wants you to take my place at lunch.

Ball: All right, but I've got, I'm working on [words unintelligible], no, but I've got a, want to see about a speech, that's all.

*John A. McCone.

Rusk?: Well, well, but maybe they could just get [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: Oh, well, we'll see how he's [words unintelligible] at the conference [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: Yes, yes.

Speaker?: They can reschedule that, that's fine.

Speaker?: [Words unintelligible] the military [words unintelligible].

JFK: Well, as I say, [I say?] you're familiar with [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: Well, uh, [words unintelligible] the SAC bombers.

JFK: No, no, no. We'd get [words unintelligible] out of [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: [Words unintelligible] make a decision here [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: What about [words unintelligible], I'll call him about this thing tomorrow.

Speaker?: [Words unintelligible] right person [words unintelligible] [two or to?] low level reconnaissance.

Speaker?: Yeah.

[End of reel 1.]

[Beginning of reel 2. Reel 2 repeats some of the conversation from the end of reel 1. Several conversations are going on at the same time and very little is intelligible.]

Speaker?: Yeah.

Speaker?: [Words unintelligible] tomorrow [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: [Words unintelligible] right person now [to do?] low level reconnaissance.

Bundy: Yeah. I was just talking to [Heinz?]. He'll get there right now. [Words unintelligible] What I think [words unintelligible]. Everybody else will sit down at the table [words unintelligible] and consider what gaps there are.

Speaker?: This is the point I want [words unintelligible] on this [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: I'm trying to find out [words unintelligible].

Speaker?: I know.

Bundy?: Why don't you drive? Pick up your car and you drive over to this, the Pentagon and have lunch with [words unintelligible]. Here,

why don't you call from here and . . .

Speaker ?:

This one still [words unintelligible].

Bundy?:

. . . come over.

Speaker ?:

This could be [words unintelligible]. Anybody else you choose.

Bundy?:

One, two. . . . [Words unintelligible] then you can sit down. . . .

Speaker ?:

Are you [words unintelligible]?

Speaker ?:

[Words unintelligible] the [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?:

See what we really [need].

Johnson:

I have, I have leased a [words unintelligible]. I have kept that [relationship?]. Uh, the only thing that we should lose some money [words unintelligible] which make sense. If you had, uh, [immediate?]/[words unintelligible] that's something else. I have a Grumman "Gulfstream" that I've leased and I want you to lease it for [MATS?] after the election. Let me use it for the ["Jetstar"?]. It's a helluva lot better for these small airfields and I think about [words unintelligible] get that more people. Well, anyway, I had a lease now and I'd, what I'd like to have is, uh, the [best?]/[words unintelligible] that you have there. If it can be done.

McNamara?:

Oh, sure.

Speaker ?:

As it is, my [words unintelligible] when I get 100, 200 miles [from Washington?]/[words unintelligible] but the highest it will go [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?:

Things like this [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?:

Let me just check [before?] I ask him?

Speaker ?:

What will it be around here about [words unintelligible]?

Bundy:

Well, he's going to telephone [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?:

Low, low level. If you think that [words unintelligible].

Bundy:

He ought to just come over and [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?:

Oh, thank you. Would you just then take the call into [words unintelligible]? Have [words unintelligible] just sit down and you're right, they're great at that.

Speaker ?:

[Words unintelligible], too.

Speaker ?:

Yes, sir.